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THE CRAYON.

Volume VII.

JULY.

Part VII.

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PUBLICATION OFFICE, 55 WALKER STREET.

CHRISTIAN ART.

As far as we can judge from the monuments which have survived from the remotest antiquity, all Art has been religious in its origin. Impelled, as it would seem, by a strong natural instinct, the great nations of old have devoted their utmost skill and energy to the construction and adornment of magnificent edifices dedicated to sacred purposes. The monumental remains of Egypt, the buried cities where the hum of a busy population once mingled with the murmur of the Euphrates and Tigris; the elaborate temples and sepulchres of India and Ceylon; the ruined cities of Central America; all bear impressive testimony to the power and universality of the devotional element in the human mind, misdirected and distorted, it may be, but even in its extremest distortion evincing an unquenchable vitality.

By what successive steps mankind declined from the knowledge and service of the true God, and through symbolical representations came at length to worship gross material forms, it is beside our present purpose to inquire: the earliest authentic records bear witness to this state of degeneracy, and it may be inferred that the stern injunction to the Israelites, not to make any graven image, was given with special reference to the gross idolatries with which they had been familiar in Egypt. It may have been with the design of weaning the chosen people from old associations and traditional records, that the ark of the covenant, that sacred symbol of their religion, was permitted so long to remain in its temporary shrine; but when the proper time at length arrived, and the divine permission was granted to build a temple at Jerusalem, then all the resources of art were called forth to furnish a structure suitable to the august design, not without special ability conferred on some of the workmen to qualify them for their task; and art, if I may so speak, was redeemed from its former profanation, and solemnly consecrated to its noblest and most appropriate purposes.

From the colossal buildings of the Egyptians and Assyrians, with profusion of symbolical decoration and historical records, we pass, as it were, over a wide chasm to the more subtle and refined art of the Greeks—to a more chaste and severe style of architecture, and to a mastery in the representation of the human form unsurpassed in all succeeding times. Grecian art may be compendiously designated as the apotheosis of physical strength and beauty, attributes which in their religious system formed the peculiar characteristics of divinity. It remained for succeeding ages and later schools of art,

whilst not neglecting or overlooking these important attributes, to breathe into the lifeless stone a higher life, and to portray in glowing colors not only the beauty of the outward and visible form, but the deeper and subtler beauties of the informing spirit, and the powers of a nobler life actuated by loftier and more spiritual aspirations. Such has been the province and the duty of Christian Art.

The strong desire to represent to the outward eye those truths on which the mind is intent, was manifested at an early period of the Christian era; and some of the earliest, perhaps the very earliest efforts of Christian Art are found in the rude monumental effigies of the Catacombs, where truths of the highest import are signified by appropriate symbols, and striking events in sacred history simply and naïvely represented.

The transition of the Christian Church from the condition of a persecuted sect to that of a powerful and finally dominant party, was naturally followed by corresponding advances in the dignity and splendor of public worship. No longer constrained to lurk in obscure hiding-places where they could meet without fear of interruption, the Christians were now free to devote their wealth and skill to the construction of suitable edifices; and as the public service of the church receded more and more from the simplicity of apostolic times, an increasing demand was made on the powers of art, and all its resources were devoted to the service and adornment of religion. I say that all the resources of art were devoted to religious purposes, and it is important to bear this in mind, that until the invasion of the heathen divinities which followed after the revival of classical learning, the objects of art and the subjects on which it was employed, were, with few exceptions, religious. Works of art in those times were not produced to hang up in exhibitions, or to form part of domestic furniture, but with a distinct purpose and aim, and with special regard to the places they were to occupy and to the circumstances which called them forth. Hence it arose that sculpture and painting were closely allied with architecture; and hence, as we are too often compelled to observe, the injury which some of the nobler works of earlier times have suffered in being torn from their appropriate places and associations. We all remember the fine description by Rogers of the grand work of Michael Angelo, "The Tombs of the Medici."

"Nor then forget that chamber of the Dead,
Where the gigantic shapes of Night and Day,
Turned into stone, rest everlastingly;
Yet still are breathing, and shed round at noon

A two-fold influence—only to be felt—
 A light, a darkness, mingling each with each;
 Both and yet neither. There, from age to age,
 Two ghosts are sitting on their sepulchres.
 That is the Duke Lorenzo. Mark him well.
 He meditates, his head upon his hand.
 What from beneath his helm-like bonnet scowls?
 Is it a face, or but an eyeless skull?
 'Tis lost in shade; yet, like the basilisk,
 It fascinates, and is intolerable.
 His mien is noble, most majestic!
 Then most so, when the distant choir is heard
 At morn or eve—nor fail thou to attend
 On that thrice-hallowed day when all are there;
 When all, propitiating with solemn songs,
 Visit the Dead. Then wilt thou feel his power.”
 —*Rogers' Italy.*

And with the music of this exquisite description sounding in our ears, how feeble and disappointing is the effect when we see a fine cast of this great work, as in the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, surrounded with all manner of incongruous associations.

From the close connection of art with religion, it naturally resulted that the works of Christian art, whether in stone, in fresco, or on canvas, were free from that unmeaning character which is too often chargeable on more modern productions. In Gothic architecture, which had attained its culminating perfection before the art of painting, the form and position of the sacred edifice, and everything connected with it, down to the minutest details of ornament, were designed to convey, directly or through significant symbols, some portion of truth and instruction; to be in some sense to the unlettered spectator in the place of a written sacred literature. In those great architectural monuments which remain to us, those priceless reliques which have escaped the ravages of time, the devastation and neglect of mis-directed zeal and callous indifference, we may still read in wondrous characters the deep meanings which were present to the minds of the founders, and the fine sense of beauty and propriety by which everything was brought into harmony with the first great object of rearing a stately and solemn temple suited to impress the mind with religious awe, and not unworthy of the high and sacred purposes to which it was designed.

————— “With living wiles
 Instinct—to rouse the heart and lead the will
 By a bright ladder to the world above.”——

Sculpture, as a Christian art, has been so closely allied with architecture that we can scarcely separate the two in a cursory review of the subject. It must be borne in mind that the grand works of Gothic architecture, those great poems in stone, if I may venture so to call them, although allied with each other by general features and by one pervading spirit, and infinitely varied in design and execution, each one being a separate original

work—with its own distinctive features and attributes. One very marked distinction is to be noticed between the cathedrals of France and England—namely, the predominance of sculpture in the former, and its comparative scarceness in our own. There is a wonderful grandeur of design and beauty of execution in the sculptured forms which adorn the lofty portals of the principal French churches; which can scarcely fail to impress the most careless observer with a sense of grandeur, and to awaken far deeper feelings in those who endeavor to realize the spirit of the authors and to read the solemn meanings which they designed to convey. I can do no more than make a passing allusion to this subject, and refer for an impressive example to the central doorway of the west front of Notre Dame of Paris—representing the last judgment—with the triumphant hosts of angels, prophets, martyrs, and other saintly personages, surrounding the throne of the Redeemer and Judge.

I must also content myself with a passing reference to a subject of great interest—the comparative merits of Greek and medieval sculpture. There is something in the highest examples of Grecian art which we miss in that of ecclesiastical times—a perfection of ease, grace, and physical beauty peculiarly its own,—but on the other hand there is a refinement of expression and a solemnity of feeling in the great works of Christian art which we miss in the consummate efforts of classical times. In the posture and drapery of the best sacred sculptures there is, moreover, if not the perfect ease and gracefulness of the others, a dignified and severe simplicity, which entirely harmonizes with the intended effect; but expression has evidently been the leading aim of the artist, and he has succeeded well in his task.

There is something half ludicrous, half painful, if we turn suddenly from these great works, to sculpture of the debased times which succeeded, in which infinite skill is wasted in putting figures into fantastic and uneasy positions, and in complicated arrangement of draperies. In many French sculptures, to which I now more particularly refer, the person seems to be a sort of accessory to the drapery, which must be carefully supported by the hands, or kept in position by a sort of acrobatic skill in balancing. In the greater works we are scarcely conscious of the excellence of the drapery and attitude, which are conducive to the general effect of the whole, and do not perceive the consummate art employed until we carefully examine the details.

As might naturally be expected from greater facility of execution and greater pliancy of material, the range of painting has been much wider and more inclusive than that of sculpture. With the gradual development of Art—must we add with the wider departure from the simplicity of Christian faith?—the subjects for illustration became almost indefinitely multiplied. The leading events in sacred history, and the glories of the heavenly hierarchy no longer sufficed to allay the devotional

cravings of the times, but saints and martyrs—a wondrous mythology of real and imaginary personages were called in to swell the train—legends and allegories embodying solemn truths, were translated into visible facts, and at length, from a radical misconception of the character of the Divine Redeemer, all that is gentle, and graceful, and lovely, and benignant, in pure, unfallen humanity, was transferred to one exalted type—the Virgin Mother, the Queen of Heaven—henceforth to be the central figure in Christian art, the object of universal homage and fealty, until the hosts of heaven succumbed to the deities of Greece and Rome, and the Cyprian Venus assumed the vacant throne.

The decline of Christian art, which began almost contemporaneously with the perfect mastery in execution attained by the great Italian painters, has sometimes been attributed and may be attributable in some degree to this very perfection of skill, but far more chiefly to the altered spirit and to the increasing corruption and degeneracy of the times; it is quite certain that many of the works of earlier masters, while deficient in dramatic power and pictorial skill and arrangement, have a degree of beauty, purity, and simplicity of feeling and expression, which we miss sometimes in the works of more skillful painters of later years.

It is time to inquire, very briefly, what has been the influence of Art on those who have been habitually conversant with its efforts, and to whom it has served as a means of instruction, perhaps as almost the only accessible means in an unenlightened age? The question is often regarded from two widely different points of view, from which conclusions as widely different have been drawn. By some persons it is determined in a very easy and compendious manner. Religion, say they, became utterly corrupted under the malign influences of the papacy, surviving only in outward forms; and an idolatrous worship was substituted in its place, differing little from the pagan idolatries which had fallen into decay; all the appliances of art being so many subtle snares of Satan to lure the unthinking multitude into fatal superstitions. Our Puritan ancestors reasoned much after this fashion, and we have to thank those honest and well-meaning, but over-zealous iconoclasts, for the destruction of many a precious monument of antiquity, in their war against heathen superstitions. This view of the matter has the merit of simplicity, but not, I think, that of truth. I cannot but believe that even in the darkest period of the middle ages, there was much of genuine devotion mingled with the prevailing worship; that those works upon which we, in our superior wisdom and enlightenment, sit in judgment—some with a critical eye to beauties or defects of composition, others with brains decently furnished with ready-made systems of belief and notions which, like the Lesbian square, are suited to take the dimensions of all ages and times, and to pronounce oracular judgments on all—that these works

I say, conveyed a widely different meaning and spoke in different accents to many a weary and troubled spirit, and not seldom carried far into the heart those eternal truths which it is our privilege to read without the aid of outward symbols. I cannot believe that the whole realm of Christendom, one or two small luminous spots alone excepted, was utterly benighted in more than Egyptian darkness, after the first few centuries of the Christian era were past. It cannot, indeed, be questioned that the truths of Christianity did suffer portentous eclipse, and were overlaid with superstitious incumbrances which went on increasing until the times of the Reformation; but I am convinced that our judgments will infallibly be unjust, and worse than unjust, if we fail to make all charitable allowance for those who, groping after truth with but a feeble and glimmering light to guide their steps, did nevertheless follow the guidance of that light with humble and sincere hearts; nay more, if we fail to believe that to them not seldom may have been given a clearer insight into truths of deepest import, than to many who, “clouded with their own conceit” look with scorn on the ignorance of past ages and lack that spirit of humility and patient research which lies at the root of all true knowledge.

An opposite view of the question is taken by others, who finding much that is amiable and attractive in mediæval art, much that is stately and solemn in the rituals of the early church, whilst a cold and formal spirit seems to brood over our own times, rush to the conclusion that the true remedy for modern shortcomings and formalities lies in a return to the splendid rites and symbolical adornments of the past, forgetting or overlooking the important circumstance that a vast amount of evil was mingled with the good which they admire; and that the pomps and stately solemnities of religion, beautiful as they might seem to the outward gaze, had, like the gorgeous parasites of tropical forests, well-nigh strangled the growth of the trunk round which they clung, forgetting likewise that it is impossible to breathe new life into forms from which the animating spirit has fled.

Having endeavored, very imperfectly to give some account of what Christian art has been, let us glance for a moment at the existing condition and the prospects of modern art.

I can imagine that if one of the devout old Italian painters could revisit the earth, and be conducted in vision through the annual exhibitions of England for the last few years, he would be not a little astonished at what he saw, and beyond measure perplexed to determine what the purpose and aim of many of our artists might be, and what religion, if any, they might chance to possess. He would certainly come to the conclusion that we had a patron saint or martyr named Harold, whose annual obsequies were celebrated as duly as the wound of Thammuz was lamented by the Syrian damsels on the banks of Adonis; but what could he think of

the great mass of our pictures and of those interminable portraits, bearing as little resemblance as might well be to the saints and martyrs of olden times. Indeed, it must be owned that after examining the best productions of our living artists, the contrast felt when we step into the National Gallery is not of the most agreeable kind. But what shall we say of the mean, low, trivial, vulgar things, I will not call them pictures, which form no inconsiderable proportion of the linings of galleries; and of the ignoble army of portraits—portraits of ladies, portraits of gentlemen, portraits of mayors, portraits of aldermen, portraits of common-councilmen, inanimate portraits of all manner of fat, heavy, stupid, insipid, unmeaning faces, relieved here and there at wide intervals by a genuine portrait of a genuine man or woman which rises above the upholsterer's standard to the dignity of a picture or work of art. I often think of what an honest farmer once said of his landlord, "what a splendid ploughman that fellow would have made if he had not been born a gentleman," and say to myself "what splendid sign-painters some of those fellows would have made, if fortune, instead of making them artists, had left them to follow their proper vocation, and adorn our way-side inns with Red Lions, Kings' Heads, Green Dragons, and other zoological curiosities."

Another species of art, to which I can only make a passing reference, forms a conspicuous portion of our annual perplexities—an art which aims, like the child in the legend of St. Augustine, to compress infinity into a few square inches, by force of mechanical drudgery; for now we have not merely three or four men of undoubted genius, who have submitted to toil in self-imposed fetters, but a host of feeble imitators, who re-produce their faults without possessing any of their redeeming merits. What the ultimate effect of this style will be on men capable of great things remains yet to be seen; to what it has led in one notable instance may be seen in a picture exhibited last year entitled "Spring," which is, indeed, so utterly strange that the modern *Œdipus*, who annually solves the riddles of our picture-galleries, was well-nigh confounded by this sphynx of a picture, and could say no more than that:

"Somehow it came into his pate,
And still is floating in his brain,
This work was meant to illustrate
Some modern Dante's tragic strain
Who, doomed in former times to pass
In English company his gay days,
Saw, carpeted with ghostly grass,
A field of penance for young ladies,
Where treacherously amiable
And vainly-joyous young girl-blossoms,
Recline in penance miserable
Under the red-hot apple-blossoms;
And sip boiled milk, all scalding hot,
Out of a poisoned porridge-pot."

However we may chose to designate or classify the contents of our modern exhibitions, it is quite clear that whatever is mean, vulgar, trivial, degrading, or sensual, in aim or treatment, must be at once excluded from the rank of Christian Art; and when this rule has been applied, it is to be feared that the works admitted to that rank will form but a very small minority.

Although, however, there is much to desire in modern English art, there are, nevertheless, encouraging signs, which justify the expectation of better things for the future. Amongst the favorable symptoms of the age may be reckoned a growing appreciation of the works of the grand old masters, and of the feelings and aims which inspired their efforts; and I think I may also add an increasing sense of the dignity and importance of Art, and of the worse than folly of employing the noblest gifts of human intellect on trivial and unimportant subjects. In architecture a movement has certainly been made in the right direction; the invaluable remains of early times are carefully and reverently preserved, and everywhere we see new churches arising such as have not been constructed for some centuries past. Indeed a decided change of opinion on one subject intimately connected with Christian Art has taken place amongst many even of the most rigid opponents of anything savoring of pomp or ceremony in public worship; and the belief that square boxes with lime-washed walls, or tenements like barns, are alone suited to the simplicity of Christian service, is quietly dying out. It should not be a matter of surprise if altered views and feelings with respect to Christian Art, and a desire for its revival should manifest itself sometimes in eccentric ways, and if some of its votaries should go astray. Of one thing we may rest assured, that such a revival will not be brought about by a servile imitation of the past, or by an attempt to breathe new life into departed forms; a diligent study of the past, and an intelligent appreciation of its pervading spirit is indeed essential; but as in nature:

— "The grandeur of the forest tree
Comes not by casting in a formal mould,
But from its own divine vitality."

Even so Art must shape itself according to its own impulses and according to the circumstances with which it has to deal; nor can we look for any healthy and enduring growth except so far as the informing spirit is present and free to work "at its own sweet will."

If we glance for a moment at the indefinite range of subjects with which Christian Art was conversant in former times, it will be obvious that many of these will no longer be available for modern artistic treatment; beautiful as many of these may be to the cultivated eye, and suggestive as they may be to the imagination which can enter deeply into the spirit of the past, we cannot bring back the unreasoning faith and the forgotten traditions which reconciled all incongruities of place and time.

Many, too, are the subjects which we should now reverentially forbear to portray, although formerly considered fit objects to be represented to the outward eye; and one great object on which the highest strength of Art was lavished, would now be dethroned from her lofty eminence, and remain to us but as a lovely type of pure and gentle womanhood. We must be content to relinquish much and we can well afford to do so; for indeed the subjects to be drawn from sacred sources alone are illimitable, and amongst the legends of martyrs and saints and confessors there is a rich treasury of themes replete with deep and solemn meaning, and of allegories embodying truths of eternal import. I cannot refrain from making a short quotation from Mrs. Jameson's admirable remarks on the constantly recurring figure of St. Michael trampling Lucifer under foot:

It is so common and so in harmony with our inmost being, that we rather feel its presence than observe it. It is the visible, palpable reflection of that great truth stamped into our very souls, and shadowed forth in every form of ancient belief—the final triumph of the spiritual over the animal and earthy part of our nature. This is the secret of its perpetual repetition, and this the secret of the untired complacency with which we regard it; for even in the most inefficient attempts at expression, we have always the leading *motif* distinct and true; the winged virtue is always victorious above, and the bestial vice is always prostrate below, and if to this primal moral significance be added all the charm of poetry, grace, animated movement, which human genius has lavished on this ever-blessed, ever-welcome symbol, then, as we look up at it, we are “not only touched but wakened and inspired,” and the whole delighted imagination glows with faith and hope, and grateful triumphant sympathy—so at least I have felt, and I must believe that others have felt it too.

I am far from thinking that Christian Art need be, or will be confined to subjects directly and professedly religious or devotional in character. The spirit of Christianity is neither narrow nor exclusive in its sympathies and tendencies, but fitted to embrace in its comprehensive grasp all that is pure, lovely, and noble, only rejecting and excluding, as utterly alien, whatever is essentially mean and base. For this reason, we may regard as one of the most hopeful signs of the times the formation of a true school of landscape art, which indeed is always a redeeming feature amidst much that is discouraging in our annual exhibitions. It may be that the works of some great masters of earlier times exhibit qualities and excellences to which we have not yet attained, but in deep feeling of natural beauty—in

Reverent watching of each still report
Which nature utters from her rural shrine,

and in faithful rendering of the glories of the visible creation, the efforts of many of our modern landscape painters have, as it seems to me, gone beyond all the attainments of preceding ages.

In thus placing Landscape Painting in the rank of Christian Art, I am not sorry to shield myself under the authority of a reverend poet, himself no mean proficient in the art which he celebrates:

He that built up this world for man and beast,
And made it beautiful. He made the eye,
That none his gracious bounty might deny—
That all might worship, greatest and the least.
He gave the Painter mind, that, Nature's priest,
He should go forth, and bid the passers-by
Behold in all things that around them lie
The temple of God, that glory be increased.
I thank thee, Lord, that underneath this hand,
Mountains have risen, green vales and forests grown.
E'en now, as these ideal clouds expand,
Feigned minstrels from out thy golden throne,
The maker of a mimic world I stand,
Adorning thy creation through my own.

—Rev. John Eagles.

Assuming, as I trust we may, that we shall witness an increasing appreciation of the dignity of art and a corresponding elevation of tone in the works of modern artists, the question naturally occurs in what way the influences of art will be brought to bear on society, for in this respect the past will afford no example to suit the altered habits and manners of life of modern times. In former ages every church (indeed, almost every public building) was in some sense a gallery of art, accessible at all times to all classes, in which the works of great artists might be seen in a suitable position and surrounded with suitable associations. In our own times, as far as religious structures are concerned, we are careful to exclude the public from a too familiar acquaintance with them, excepting those who can afford to pay for the privilege; but even if this rule should be altered, it does not seem probable, or indeed consistent with the severer simplicity of Protestantism, that we should return to the elaborate decoration of earlier ages, or that painting and sculpture should to any considerable extent be employed in adorning our churches. A wider range may be allowed to architecture, which may be taxed to the utmost of its resources to render our Christian temples worthy of the high service to which they are consecrated, due regard being had to the main purpose of awakening a solemn and reverential feeling, without distracting the attention to details. As a general rule, however, modern art must be more widely diffused and become more generally denizenized as a household thing; there is an instinctive craving for something of the sort—a natural shrinking from bare walls—and one can scarcely enter any of the humblest cottages of the poor without seeing some pictorial decoration, however wretched and tawdry it may be. In process of time we may hope that a better class of work may displace what is wholly worthless, and that amongst the more educated classes, an improved feeling will banish many staring family por-

traits—cruel misrepresentations of not unworthy people—and other trash which too often afflicts the eye in houses where we might look for better things. I am not altogether without hope that a worthy acquaintance of my own will some day displace that object of his fond parental gaze wherein seven gawky children, with wings under their chins, bearing but little resemblance to the inhabitants of this world, and none at all, as I humbly hope, to those of heaven, are perched for ever on solid clouds, to the amazement and horror of all unprejudiced beholders.

We may also confidently predict that the general diffusion of knowledge, which seems likely to go on without check or restraint, will not be limited to what is termed in the utilitarian cant of the day, "useful knowledge;" but that in course of time works of art of the noblest order may be made generally accessible to all classes (at least in large towns), in public libraries, mechanics' institutes, lecture-rooms, and elsewhere. It is not unknown to persons who have had much intercourse with the poor, that many of them evince a real taste for even the higher class of literature, and it is not unreasonable to believe that in like manner many would derive instruction and delight from a literature which addresses itself to the eye. Indeed, it must be borne in mind that a large proportion of all men's knowledge is derived through the medium of that "magic organ, but for whose powerful charm earth were a rude uncolored chaos still;" much more, in fact, than studious and bookish men are wont to allow; and we can ill afford to neglect any, even the slightest, and most indirect influence for good, which can be brought to bear upon mankind. I have little sympathy with those who believe that the mechanical triumphs of modern times, and the vast progress of physical science are inconsistent or incompatible with the highest development of the powers of imagination, and that such developments can indeed only have full play in comparatively rude and ignorant times. I believe that Art and Science, each in its own appointed way, and in its own proper sphere, are destined to achieve vast services for mankind; the one in searching out the wondrous laws of nature and in extending man's dominion over the material world; the other in interpreting the mysteries of the visible creation, and in giving utterance to feelings and aspirations which we lack the power to express until some master spirit shapes them into form and color, or fixes them for ever in living words: both of them as powerful auxiliaries of intellectual and moral culture, and as reverent handmaids of Religion, whose service will constitute their highest glory. G. H. M.

It would be a great advantage to some schoolmasters if they would steal two hours a day from their pupils and give their own minds the benefit of the robbery.—*Boyes.*

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DANTE AND MILTON.

BY MRS. E. VALE SMITH.

II.

It has not unfrequently happened, in the history of literary men, that their popular fame has rested upon one out of many works. Sometimes a brief poem, or even a few striking sentences, has immortalized a name which, but for that one happy effort, would have remained involved in the comparative obscurity which covers their contemporaries, and which these fortunate ones have thus eclipsed, occasionally, it would seem, more by accident than purpose. Who thinks of Grey as a professor of modern history, as a compiler of tables of chronology and botany, as the author of certain fine Pindaric odes, or as the poetic eulogist of Milton? Not one out of many thousands; while his "Elegy" is destined to a perpetuity and popularity coextensive with the language in which it was penned. Neither the name, labors, or self-sacrifice of the Rev. Charles Wolfe would probably ever have been heard of, outside of his own parish, had he not one day given to the world a few sympathetic and soul-stirring verses, commemorating the death of Sir John More. What pictures of chivalry of fair ladies and brave knights instantly start into lively remembrance as we hear pronounced the name of Spenser! Yet to his own day, how much more needful was that "Treatise on the State of Ireland," which he wrote, than the "Fairy Queen." That remarkable work on Conic Sections, with all the mathematical and scientific writings of Pascal, are forgotten in the immediate and lasting fame which gathered upon the author of the "Provincial Letters."

And thus it has been, to some extent, with Dante and Milton; of all which they wrote, the "Divina Comedia" and "Paradise Lost" have alone united the suffrages of the learned and unlearned in a common admiration. Yet, unlike some of the instances above referred to, this was no accidental result: Dante, at the close of his "Vita Nuova," declared his intention of thereafter writing a work which should immortalize his love, and Beatrice's virtues: and in many passages of his *Comedia* the perfect consciousness is avowed that his poem will live for ages, giving fame or infamy to whomsoever he praises or decries in its verses. Six hundred years of an ever-increasing reputation, show that his conscious prophecy was based on something far sounder than vanity. Milton, too, throughout his prose writings, continually gives the plainest hints, nay, does not hesitate to say that he "aims at immortality," as in his letter to Deodati (1637). "Do you ask me what is my thought? So may God prosper me, it is nothing less than immortality. My wings are spreading, and I meditate to fly; but while my Pegasus yet lifts himself on very tender pinions, let me be prudent," etc. And again, in one of his polemical works, he says, addressing the Deity, "he